

he thought of his toenails growing inexorably
down there in his boots
he also thought of his mother
& of his father too
they had taught him many songs

One day Sandoz had had to kill many snakes
he did not like to do this but they threatened the stock
also they could injure his own horse
he was thinking of these things as he stopped
at the river to gather a drink
as his eyes followed his cupped hands he saw
a snake in the water it was looking at him
he mounted and road off
still thirsty

Sandoz could not tell the authorities
how large the ranch was when they came and asked
his first job there had been to ride fence
all he knew was that it had taken seven weeks
to ride the perimeter of the place
he got a little paranoid at first
though of course he didn't know that word
he thought maybe Slim had meant to just leave him out
there

but then Sandoz had faith and enuff food
plus the songs he had learned as a boy

The Collector

he starts out each day with gin and speed
then drives to "the other house" where he
walks in the gardens for one half-hour
seeing no people speaking to no thing
save the one bluebird he trusts
he spends \$30 a month for sunflowerseed
and more than that for plants and flowers
often he performs the transplants himself
his houses and grounds are constantly
undergoing major alterations or paint
or architecturally bizarre enlargements
he has bridges built over tiny streams
also a gazebo in the midst of an orange grove
he concludes his morning excursion
by pissing on the hollyhock behind his office
it is almost twenty feet tall now
with a lovely strawberry bloom
then he goes into the mansion (TITANIA LIBRARY
his cards read: An Empire of Important Books)
where he sits at the world's most disorganized desk
as long as he can remain motionless
he uses the phone and opens the mail there
but its principle function is as shelter

he eats no lunch but drinks coffee
chainsmokes and drops speed instead
he is sixty years old but does not look it
his neck is permanently kinked so he
carries his head at the port quarter
and walks like a windup toy
he is proud of his physical strength
more proud of his ability to lie and forget nothing
his wife gives him a monthly allowance
of \$10,000 and he drives much too fast
sometimes he burns a sore on the back
of his left hand "to cauterize it" he says
looking sheepish looking like a dirty grisaille
he owns in excess of 100,000 books
housed in various mansions estates and warehouses
in two or three parts of the world
he loses track of them as fast as he buys them
then reports them as stolen to the authorities
even though he has a system for cataloging them
and a crew of typists and shelveers to do the work
they start in the ballroom then fan out
to the upstairs bedrooms studies closets and so on
he hires kids whom he has never heard of or seen before
hitchhikers who have heard of him up and down the coast
come seeking work one day he gave a kid ten dollars
to dig a hole and after lunch another ten
to fill it in:

when asked he replied only
I always hated the old army game
from time to time shady looking college boys come
to see him this is because he likes speed better
buying from them rather than on prescription
twice a year one of his gardeners gathers the gin bottles
scattered in various arbors about the grounds
they fill the bed of a pickup truck
twice a year also he takes 30-day around-the-world
bookbuying trips and sometimes his wife goes too
she is in her late 80s now a really grande dame
formerly a distinguished writer on psychopathology
she married extremely well and did better with what was
left

when queried her present husband the collector
looks greyly harried and responds
yes I'm a piss-ease as if there had to be something
intrinsically flawed about all born under that sign
dealers and scouts the world over
save for him their most soiled and defaced wares
some keep them in barrels in basement corners
buying makes him feel a way he likes so he goes
sometimes he goes to smalltown Sally rummage sales
where he tells the people there he's from
some neighboring town's public library
at the mansion he lives for the mail
when it comes he opens packages ruthlessly

he opens each book and scribbles in large letters
all over the front free endpaper expressions like
GRABHORN PRESS LIMITED EDITION! FIRST BRITISH EDITION
FIRST ISSUE WITH CONTENTS LATER SUPPRESSED
and lies about the condition they are all FINE FINE FINE
SUPERB IN THE ORIGINAL GLASSINE and so on
then he slams the book to the floor
or the top of the pile he's working on
in such a way as to leave no doubt about the size
of his scorn for the whole world of the intellect
he loves to dole out usually derogatory stories
about the authors of the books he holds to his boys
or those few people that come to see him
he spends hundreds a month calling libraries
who say they will send people out but do not
and next day more packages arrive from his scouts
all over the U.S. as well as Europe South Africa Australia
also Japan which he says he enjoys visiting
always he complains about prices but always signs the checks
then time for more cigarets and/or coffee
more telephone calls and sometimes
he walks in the gardens afternoons too
fishing out one of his stashed gin bottles
consulting workmen who are remodelling or tradesmen
who bring things for which there is no black market
then back to the phone and more pacing about
he believes his caretaker steals books from him too
also food though the man is steadfast
he loves flowers and plants but seems to
despise trees and has many of his own cut down
he is sixty years old and sometimes looks it
he is tough though and has a grip of iron
he works harder than most men ever dream of
reading catalogs writing letters cajoling by phone
driving himself through twenty-hour days or more
he lusts for the young men that work for him
but complains about the pittance he pays them
and tells stupid dirty jokes for cover

-- Sandy Dorbin

Flagstaff, AZ

Body naked
Curled over the
Camp fire for
Warmth. Trees
Shadows there a
Round midnight
Dark moon
Legs tucked curled
Neck back
Please turn around
I want to see the
Fire on your tits